Peer Coaching to Counteract Organizational Silence and Foster a Culture of Dialogue

OBSERVER ROLE

An associate professor and clinical practice leader, Sarah, has asked to meet with the Association of American Medical Colleges Group on Faculty Affairs/Group on Women In Medicine and Science representative for her school for advice about dealing with a difficult faculty member, Joe, who sees patients in the practice.

Joe has a history of disruptive behavior; he complains loudly about resources for clinical care and the competence of the clinic staff. Joe frequently sends emails that Sarah finds difficult to deal with. They are accusatory (“You aren’t advocating for the group effectively”), and threatening (“If things don’t improve, I can’t keep seeing patients”) and demeaning (“Do you even know what you are doing?”) Sarah finds the comments about her competence as a leader personally offensive and suspects that Joe has trouble with a woman in a leadership role. Most recently, things have gotten worse with Joe because he is unhappy with the new Electronic Health Record (EHR) and sends emails complaining about the system and the effect it is having on patient care. He sees the introduction of the EHR as one more factor that interferes with his ability to provide excellent patient care. He sees himself as a staunch advocate for his patients and feels responsible for doing what it takes to provide them with outstanding care, even if it means making waves. The nursing staff is complaining that Joe is rude to them in front of patients. He sees Sarah as a “nice person” and as not pushing hard enough for resources to improve the clinic.

Feedback guidelines:

- Offer observations- what you saw, heard or felt. Be specific, behavioral
- Comment on the strengths in your colleague’s approach
- Ask questions- “I’m curious, when you did X, what was your intention?” or “how did it feel when s/he asked/said Y?”
- Hold suggestions for last
- Don’t “should” on the coach